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The Chinese-born French composer Chen Qigang's solo piano composition *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* (*Moments from a Peking Opera*) demonstrates the fruitful interaction of traditional Chinese musical practices with modern Western compositional concepts as a medium for the composer's creativity. Chen Qigang seeks to integrate musical inspirations that derive from different cultural backgrounds into his own compositions, while conveying his native artistic heritage through complex technical constructions.

A brief survey of the social, political, and cultural backgrounds of Chen Qigang will provide readers with a concrete historical context of Chinese music at the turn of the 1980s. Observations regarding traditional Chinese music will provide necessary support to analyze Chen's music. An introduction to some of the composer's representative ensemble works will illustrate his growing success in integrating ancient, traditional Chinese arts with modern, novel Western compositional methods. The score study of the piano solo composition *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* will primarily focus on its tonal language and formal design, revealing how the composer manipulates Chinese musical material by using Western procedures and uses the technique of "developing variation" to elaborate a simple musical idea drawn from the music of the Peking Opera.

Chen Qigang is among the first generation of Chinese composers who studied abroad to pursue his musical career after the Cultural Revolution. Compared with Tan Dun, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, and a number of other Chinese composers, he is less well-

known to North American audiences. This study aims to increase the awareness of and appreciation for contemporary Chinese music by introducing Chen's works to a wider public.

CROSS-CULTURAL SYNTHESIS IN CHEN QIGANG'S PIANO COMPOSITION

INSTANTS D'UN OPÉRA DE PÉKIN

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Brief Historical Survey of Music in Mainland China at the Turn of the 1980s

The year the ten-year Cultural Revolution ended, 1977, was one of the most crucial moments in the entire history of China.¹ It was the year that the nationwide higher education system was restored, and the national University entrance examination was revived after a decade-long lapse.² The eager desire to study, which had been stifled, censored, and even penalized during the Cultural Revolution, again arose among students, many of whom had planned to complete their school programs a decade earlier. Despite lost time and deferred dreams of becoming professional performing artists, young musicians moved ahead to embark on their careers after this social-political catastrophe. The famous 1978 composition class of the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, including the notable composers Chen Yi, Zhou Long, and Tan Dun, was born

¹ The death of Chairman Mao Zedong in September, 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four in October, 1976 symbolized the end of the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping, who later became the Chairman of China in 1981, proposed the idea of re-evaluating the intellectuals and put forward political and economic reformations at the Science and Education Work Forum held in August, 1977. His speech initiated the public denunciation of the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution. Lawrence R. Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of the People's Republic of China*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), xxv-xxvi, 163.

² The college and university entrance exam was first restored in 1977 on a provincial level and in 1978 on a national level. Bill Brugger, *China: Radicalism to Revisionism 1962-1979* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), 214.

from this situation.³ Among them, Chen Yi was the first Chinese woman to receive a Master's degree in Music from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Later she received her doctoral degree from Columbia University in New York. She has taught composition at the University of Missouri in Kansas City since 1998, and her piano, chamber, choral and orchestral works have been performed throughout the States, China and Europe.⁴ Zhou Long, also continued his composition study in the States and was recently awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his opera, *Madame White Snake*.⁵ Tan Dun, who grew up in a Shamanistic culture, was a nonconformist from the beginning.⁶ Although prolific in opera and film scores, he is most famous for using non-traditional instruments such as water and paper, and for incorporating multimedia into his orchestral compositions. He is now considered to be one of the most successful composers in the world.⁷ Other composers from the 1978 class include Ye Xiaogang, Qu Xiaosong, Guo Wenjing, Su Song, and Chen Qigang, who all have been playing active roles in China and

³ Liu Ching-chih, *A Critical History of New Music in China*, trans. by Caroline Mason (Hong Kong: The Chinese University, 2010), 516.

⁴ The Living Composers Project, "Chen Yi," Kalvos & Damian's New Music Bazaar, <http://composers21.com/compdocs/chenyi.htm> (accessed Feb 26, 2012).

⁵ Oxford University Press, "Zhou Long," <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/music/composers/zhoulong.do> (accessed Feb 26, 2012).

⁶ *Shamanism* is an ancient religion primarily practiced in northern Europe and Siberia, according to which indigenous people believe that their lives, nature, and the unseen world of gods, demons and other spirits are influenced by the priest-doctor or *shaman*. Shamanism can also be used to describe similar religions, such as that of North-West American Indians. OED Online. March 2012, "shamanism, n.," Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/177389?redirectedFrom=shamanism> (accessed April 28, 2012).

⁷ Tan Dun Online, "About Tan Dun," 2012 Parnassus production Inc, <http://www.tandunonline.com/about.html> (accessed February 26, 2012).

abroad, and who continue to bring us new works.⁸ Chen Qigang and his music form the core of this research study.

This first generation of Chinese composers whose work has been widely performed in the world shares some common features. First, the cultural and educational exchanges between China and the West after the Cultural Revolution brought with them new compositional concepts and techniques that revolutionized these composers' musical language.⁹ Second, the relatively liberal social-political environment provided them with more freedom to express their insights through music, encouraging individual compositional-styles and welcoming the advent of contemporary music in China.¹⁰ Third, while absorbing foreign influences and earning international reputations, they all faced the challenge of balancing national and international traits in their compositions. These composers feel obligated to preserve Chinese musical tradition in the context of global contemporary musical culture, while dialoguing with the West through reinterpretation of the tradition. In attempting to reach this goal, Chen Qigang developed a unique musical voice that represents a synthesis of cross-cultural elements.

⁸ Liu, *A Critical History of New Music in China*, 516.

⁹ Liu, 538.

¹⁰ Liu, 514.

Chen Qigang: An Overview of His Life and Works

Chen Qigang's name was rarely heard by the Chinese and North American audiences before 2008. As a classical composer, his fame was overshadowed by his contemporaries such as Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Tan Dun, and others. Most of Chen Qigang's musical activity in the past three decades took place in France. It was only after being appointed as the Music Director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, and composing the Olympic theme song, *You and Me*, that his name became well known to the general public.

Chen Qigang was born into a cultured intellectual family in Shanghai, in 1951. His father, Chen Shuliang, was a famous Chinese calligrapher and painter; his mother, Xiao Yuan, was a pianist and music teacher. Very soon the family moved to Beijing. During his childhood and youth in Beijing, he learned ancient Chinese literature through calligraphy and painting and enjoyed accompanying his father to watch the Peking Opera.¹¹

From an early age Chen Qigang had a penchant for challenging himself and trying new things. Although he never studied music, he admired his peers who could play and sing, especially his older sister who played the piano. At the age of thirteen, Chen made his own decision to become a music major. Entering the Central Music Conservatory affiliate middle school with no music training, he chose clarinet as his major

¹¹ Ming Yan, "A Late Bloomer — A study of Chen Qigang's Music," *Symphony — Quarterly of Xi'an Conservatory of Music* 26, no. 1 (March, 2007): 42, <http://www.verylib.com/QiKan/66314O/200701/48832242.htm> (accessed March, 30, 2012).

instrument.¹² However, normal student life only lasted two years for him; the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 paralyzed the entire education system in China. After experiencing a lengthy period of political instability, he was sent to the southeastern part of China for ideological re-education, while his father was sentenced as a bourgeois and anti-revolutionary and forced to work in an agricultural commune. Later in 1973 Chen was recruited as the principal clarinetist in the Song and Dance Organization in the city of Hangzhou to perform music mostly promulgated by the government for propaganda purposes.¹³ During this repressive period, he never gave up the study of music; he even taught himself conducting and orchestration. After the Cultural Revolution ended and the educational system was revived in 1977, Chen immediately returned to Beijing and re-auditioned at the Central Music Conservatory. This time, he ranked first in instrumental performance but twelfth in composition. Surprisingly, he chose the latter field, which was completely new to him, and became a member of the famous 1978 Central Conservatory composition class.

At the age of twenty-seven Chen Qigang was one of the eldest students in the class and had almost no formal training in composition. By the time the first New Music Concert was held in Beijing in the early 1980s, his peers were playing active roles in the New Wave movement and shocking audiences with novel compositional idioms and techniques, whereas Chen Qigang had barely finished fundamental studies including

¹² That year the conservatory accepted students with no music background. Lian Xiansheng, "Interview with Chen Qigang," took place on April 1, 2001. *Culture and Society*, under "Article/Music." This article was published in *Philharmonic* magazine in a series that ran monthly from June to September of 2002, <http://wen.org.cn/modules/article/view.article.php/c3/403> (accessed January 8, 2012).

¹³ Hangzhou is the capital city of Zhejiang province, around 110 miles southwest of Shanghai.

harmony and counterpoint with his teacher Luo Zhongrong.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he was greatly inspired by the lectures and master classes offered by foreign visiting scholars. Among them was Cambridge University professor Alexander Goehr, whose introduction to Schoenberg, Messiaen, Boulez, and Iannis Xenakis stimulated in Chen Qigang a desire to study abroad. In 1983, he successfully passed the National Postgraduate Selection Examination and obtained an opportunity to study in France.¹⁵

Soon after arriving in France, he made another important life decision by bravely writing a letter of self-recommendation to Olivier Messiaen, who had already retired from the Paris Conservatoire. To his surprise, the Master replied to his letter and expressed a willingness to meet him after two months. The audition went successfully and Qigang became Messiaen's private student from 1984 to 1988. Meanwhile, he also worked with composers Ivo Malec, Betsy Jolas, Claude Ballif and Jacques Castédat, and attended training sessions at the *Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique / Musique* in Paris (IRCAM) as well as at the *Accademia Chigiana* in Siena with Franco Donatoni. He obtained the *Diplôme Supérieur de Composition* at the *École Normale de Musique de Paris* in 1988, and the Diploma of Musicology from the Sorbonne in 1989.¹⁶

¹⁴ Frank Kouwenhoven, "Chen Qigang: A Brazen Chinese Romantic in France," Chen Qigang Official Webpage, http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/chenqigang/Eng_Dissertation/200353161752.htm (accessed December 16, 2011); Jin Jie, *Chinese Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 130.

¹⁵ Lian Xiansheng, "Interview with Chen Qigang."

¹⁶ Chen Qigang Official webpage, under "biography," <http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/FE/english.htm> (accessed Mar 25, 2012).

Qigang Chen has continued to live in France since 1984 with his reputation growing after 1986. He was awarded the Nadia and Lili Boulanger grant in 1989 and 1992, the *Prize Villa Medici Hors les Murs* in 1993, and the Grand Prize of Symphonic Music by SACEM (Society of Composers and Publishers) in 2005. He has also been active as a resident composer and professor at the *Centre Acanthes* in Avignon in 1997, and as the President of the Jury of the 9th International Composition Contest in Besançon in 1998. He became a visiting professor at the China Conservatory in 1996 and at the Shanghai Music Conservatory in 2003. As mentioned previously, he was also appointed the Music Director for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games, serving from 2007 to 2008.

Chen Qigang's major compositions include *Poème lyrique II* (1991) for baritone voice and instrumental ensemble;¹⁷ *Extase* (1995) for oboe and orchestra;¹⁸ *Reflet d'un temps disparu* (1995-1996) for violoncello and orchestra;¹⁹ *Wu Xing (Five Elements)* (1999) for instrumental ensemble;²⁰ concert suite *Iris Dévoilé* (2001) for three female voices, three traditional Chinese instruments and grand orchestra; music for the ballet

¹⁷ Commissioned by the Amsterdam Nieuw Ensemble. *Chen Qigang official webpage*, under "Works," <http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/FE/english.htm> (accessed March 10, 2012).

¹⁸ Commissioned by the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie and French Ministry of Culture. Ibid.

¹⁹ Commissioned by Radio France, and had the first audition in Paris by Yoyo Ma and the Orchestre National de France, in 1998. Ibid.

²⁰ This work earned Chen the Grand Prize of Symphonic Music of SACEM in 2005.

Raise the Red Lantern (2000-2001); and *Er Huang* (2009) for piano and orchestra.²¹

A recording of *Iris D'évoil é, Reflet d'un temps disparu*, and *Wu Xing* was released by EMI/Virgin Classics in 2003.²²

²¹ This concerto was commissioned by Carnegie Hall, and its world premiere was given by the pianist Lang Lang with the Juilliard Orchestra, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage, Carnegie Hall, New York City on October 28, 2009. The work was revised in March 2010. Chen Qigang, *Er Huang*. Concerto for piano and orchestra. London: Boosey & Hawkeys, 2010. Score in C. 39 pp. 244 measures.

²² *Iris D'évoil é-Reflet d'un temps disparu-Wu Xing*. Ma Shuai, Yo-yo Ma, Wu bixia, Orchestre National de France, Benetti, Dutoit, Tang. *Chen Qigang*, EMI Record Ltd/Virgin Classics, LC 7873 Stereo/DDD, 2003.

CHAPTER II

CHEN QIGANG'S MUSICAL WORLD

Overview

As a Chinese composer who has been studying and living in France since 1984, Chen Qigang's music bears the imprint of both Chinese and Western cultural influences. Living in China until the age of thirty-three, he enjoyed an unencumbered childhood, during which he was able to absorb certain quintessential elements of the traditional Chinese arts under the tutelage of his father. The music of the Peking Opera, the most precious musical resource to Chen in this time period, later contributed greatly to his individuality as a composer. In Beijing, the progressive artistic environment also exposed him to both the Eastern and Western music. Eventually, despite his father's desire to train him as a Peking Opera actor, Chen's curiosity about foreign musical arts led him to study Western music in Beijing Conservatory of Music. His youth coincided with a period of great social upheaval. Because he was forced to witness the devastation of the traditional Chinese artistic heritage, much of Chen's work reveals his urge to reestablish a lost tradition. During his years in France his talent was ignited by his encounter with Messiaen and by other opportunities for study, introducing him to new cultural, ideological, and musical concepts, and leading him perfect his compositional

skills. All these factors gradually shaped him into a complete musician and distinguished Chinese composer.

Pitch Structure and Modes in Chinese Pentatonic Scales

In order to clarify the theme and tonal plan of *Instantants d'un Opéra de Peking*, an introduction to the pitch structure and modes in Chinese pentatonic scales is necessary. The ancient Chinese highly respected the study of temperament. Along with the establishment of calendars and measurements, it ranked as a matter of supreme importance in each dynasty.²³ Believing that musical temperament should be in harmony with nature and the seasons, the ancients formulated a twelve-pitch system within one octave by measuring tubes or strings, naming each pitch to correspond to the twelve *shichen* (时辰) in a day and twelve months in a year.²⁴ The Chinese fundamental pitch ranges from C-sharp to A above middle C in different historical time periods, because of variations in the length of the original tube or string chosen to generate the fundamental pitch, depending on the contemporary measurement system.²⁵

The Chinese discovered that the pitch most harmonious to the fundamental pitch is the perfect fifth. A fifth above can be obtained by cutting the second tube to two-thirds the length of the original tube, and a fifth below by adding one third the length of the first.

²³ People in ancient China divided a day into twelve sections, called *shichen* (时辰). Each *shichen* equals two hours. Du Yaxiong and Qin, Dexiang, *Chinese Music Theory*, 2nd ed. (Shanghai, China: Shanghai Conservatory Press, 2007), 139, 142.

²⁴ Du Yaxiong and Qin Dexiang, *Chinese Music Theory*, 141-142.

²⁵ Du and Qin, *Chinese Music Theory*, 141.

However, the “circle of fifth” temperament determines that the more times an additional fifth is generated, the greater impurity exists. Thus, by generating pure fifths through this tripartite method in the order C, G, D, A, E, and so on, and rearranging them within an octave in ascension, the five pitches produce the following scale, assuming the fundamental pitch as C (see Figure 1).²⁶

Figure 1. C Pentatonic Scale








The pentatonic scale generated through the “circle of fifths” temperament contains no semitones, and the tones contained in it were considered the most harmonious among the twelve scale degrees. The tuning of most Chinese musical instruments is based on these intervals as well. For instance, the two-stringed fiddle, the *erhu* (二胡) is always tuned to a fifth; the four-stringed plucked lute, the *pipa* (琵琶) is conventionally tuned to A-D-E-A in ascension. The tuning for multi-stringed zithers such as the *zheng* (箏) and the *qin* (琴) are based on pentatonic scales, through which a pentatonic scale glissando can be easily produced and well resonated. Ancient musicians also gave names to these five scale degrees as *gong* (宮), *shang* (商), *jue* (角), *zhi* (徵), and *yu* (羽). The five

²⁶ These pitches are not obtained through calculation of pitch frequency but through physical instrumental measurement. Therefore, although named with letters of the alphabet, they are not precisely the same pitches as those in a chromatic sound system engendered by equal temperament.

modes that can be developed from these degrees represent a range of musical emotions.

The names of these modes are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Five Chinese Pentatonic Modes

Name of Mode	Modal Degree	Score Notation	Interval Relationship
C <i>gong</i> mode	C-D-E-G-A		M2 – M2 – m3 – M2
D <i>shang</i> mode	D-E-G-A-C		M2 – m3 – M2 – m3
E <i>jue</i> mode	E-G-A-C-D		m3 – M2 – m3 – M2
G <i>zhi</i> mode	G-A-C-D-E		M2 – m3 – M2 – M2
A <i>yu</i> mode	A-C-D-E-G		m3 – M2 – M2 – m3

The term *gong* carries triple meanings in Chinese music theory. Take C pentatonic scale as an example. First, it is the name for the first scale degree in this C pentatonic scale, similar to “tonic” in Western music theory. Second, it is the mode name for the first mode C-D-E-G-A, which sounds untransposed as the original C pentatonic scale. In this meaning, *gong* is treated as the principal mode due to its tonal stability. Third, in addition to *gong*’s primary status in its first two aspects, the other four modes are generated diatonically based on the principal *gong* mode, sharing the same key signature. Thus, although they start on different pitches, the other four modes’ true tonic is still the pitch C. The summation of all the five modes is called the “*gong* system,” and a *gong* system established on a C pentatonic scale is called “C *gong* system” (see Figure 1). Correspondingly, a G *gong* system, sharing the pitch G as the tonic, can be formed based on a G pentatonic scale, with its modes named as follows:

G *gong* mode: G-A-B-D-E,
A *shang* mode: A-B-D-E-G,
B *jue* mode: B-D-E-G-A,
D *zhi* mode: D-E-G-A-B,
E *yu* mode: E-G-A-C-D.

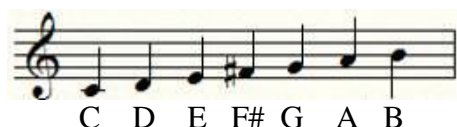
Based on the above theory, a compositional technique called “*gong* shift” (or mode shift) is commonly used in Chinese music, adding interest to the melodic development. Appendix C provides a music excerpt from *Variations in D*, a solo piano work for young children by the contemporary Chinese composer Li Yinghai. In this work, the theme, all its variations and the coda start and end in D; some of the melodies, as in the theme and the first variation, are almost identical. However, the change of melodic mode and key signature indicate the application of multiple *gong* systems in this short work. By reorganizing the pitches in each variation into the interval relationship of the principal mode, which is M2 – M2 – m3 – M2, one can see that the *gong* system shifts from D to C, F, B-flat, and C, and ends on D. Thus, changes of musical character in this interesting miniature work are achieved through “*gong* shift.” The tonal analysis in Chapter III will follow the same naming system discussed here.

Throughout Chinese history, this tonal pentatonic scale and the “*gong* system” prevailed in music composition, especially in court ceremonies and rituals in Mandarin territories.²⁷ However, in folk and regional music, the intervallic relationships among the five degrees vary, because more tones were added to form hexatonic and heptatonic

²⁷ Other pentatonic scales existing in regional Chinese music include the semi-tonal pentatonic scale (C-E-F-A-B) and the neutral pentatonic scale (C-D-F-G-B). Du and Qin, *Chinese Music Theory*, 168.

scales so as to meet the need of a certain style. The music of the Peking Opera typically adopted a type of heptatonic scale that adds two tones to the pentatonic scale:

Figure 3. Heptatonic Scale in the Peking Opera



Like the blue notes in jazz, these added tones largely enrich the melodic nuances in the Peking Opera (see Appendix A). Although the added tones colorize the melody, the melodic development is still shaped by the principal intervals.

The Peking Opera

The Peking Opera, known as *jingju* (京剧), is today's most popular theatre art in China and overseas. It flourished during the Qing dynasty, the last dynasty of ancient China (1644-1911). Along with the rise of Beijing as the political and cultural center of China, the Peking Opera was promoted as the national opera. The Beijing dialect, now known as Mandarin, the official language used in China, was used in the Peking Opera singing from its heyday until now, lending prestige and popularity to this art form. The high-pitched two-string fiddle, *jinghu* (京胡), is the primary accompanying instrument. Its characteristic timbre distinguishes the music of the Peking Opera from that of other regional theatres. Other accompanying instruments include the Chinese lute, *pipa* (琵琶), the flute, *dizi* (笛子), and the drums, *luogu* (锣鼓), which respectively represent the

strings, the woodwinds, and the percussion in the traditional Peking Opera orchestra setting.

The theatrical scenes of the Peking Opera can be divided into two types. Civil scenes, consisting of dialogues, arias and ballads, are accompanied by the strings and woodwinds. Battle scenes, famous for their acrobatics and martial arts, are supported by the percussion instruments. Two different melodic and singing styles exist in the civil scenes: the cheerful, lively *xipi* (西皮) style in *yu* mode and the lyrical, sorrowful *erhuang* (二黄) style in *zhi* mode. However, both *xipi* and *erhuang* contain many subdivisions influenced by particular rhythms and tempos, for example the basic *moderato* tempo in 2/4 meter, *andante* in 4/4 meter, and *allegro* in 1/4 or even 1/8 meter. Thus, it is hard to tell the differences between these two styles simply by their musical characters. The best way to distinguish them relies on the tuning of the major accompanying instrument, *jinghu* (the fiddle). For instance, if the music is written in the key of C, then the fiddle is tuned to A and E (low A and high E, a fifth apart) when playing in the lively *xipi* style, and to G and D (low G and high D, a fifth apart) when playing in the sorrowful *erhuang* style.²⁸ Therefore the *xipi* style always carries a flavor of the *yu* mode (close to the minor mode in Western theory) while the *erhuang* style presents the *zhi* mode (close to the major mode). In addition to the tuning, the melodic development and its cadences also help to differentiate *xipi* from *erhuang* (see appendix A). The melodic and singing styles in Peking opera are affected by role types, the special

²⁸ Xiang Chen and Shao Hua, *Brief Encyclopedia of Peking Opera* (Beijing, China: People's Music Publishing Press, 2009), 34-36.

needs of the plot, and many other factors. The information presented here simply gives the basic guidelines.

Chen Qigang's Artistic Treatment of the Peking Opera Elements

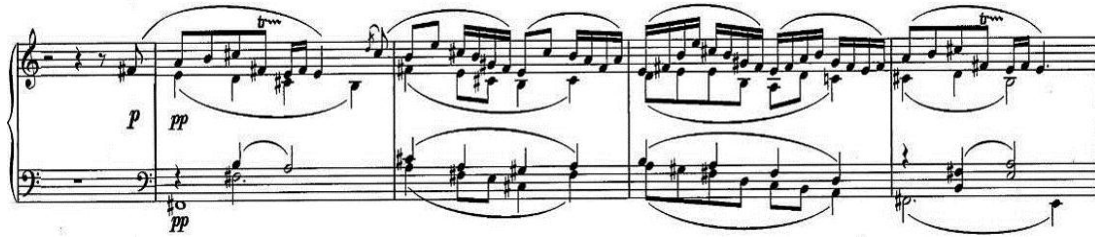
Familiar with the musical language of Peking Opera from an early age, Chen Qigang has employed many elements from this comprehensive theatre art in his writing. The earliest example can be heard in his *Poème Lyrique II*, written in 1991, for baritone voice and instrumental ensemble. The lyric is based on a famous ancient Chinese poem by Su Shi, who lived in the *Song* dynasty (1037-1101). The human voice part features sliding tones and exaggerated vibrato singing intended to enhance the expressiveness of the lyrics. In Peking Opera singing and dialogue, a syllable can be extended, glided, or vibrated as needed to emphasis or dramatize the meaning of a word. This artistically unites spoken and singing styles. Chen Qigang borrowed these techniques to render the poem and accentuated its most nuanced, subtle emotions.

Chen Qigang's ballet music *Raise the Red Lantern* stands out as one of his most successful works. In addition to the novel costume and stage design of this ballet, music in the style of the Peking Opera is heard throughout. The work reached a wide audience in both China and the West. The Chinese musical instruments incorporated into the Western orchestra, especially those characteristic percussion instruments such as cymbals, gongs, woodblocks, and castanets, faithfully represent the authentic sound of the Peking Opera. All the characteristic and vernacular idioms from the opera are presented, notably the non-verbal and non-tempered vocalization, the *xipi* and *erhuang* melodic styles with

slide tones, and the unique Peking Opera percussion rhythms. These traditional elements immediately evoked a psychological resonance among Chinese audiences while arousing great interest among Western audiences due to their exotic novelty. At the same time, the use of Western instruments greatly refined the overall sonority: the Western strings impart greater sentiment and lyricism to the *erhuang* style, while the Western brass instruments and timpani thicken the symphonic texture, reinforce the dynamics, and amplify the dissonances. In the less intense scenes, the scoring of strings and woodwinds reflects the composer's French influence, with the French horn adding warmth to the background and the harp adding its enchanting timbre. The application of parallel harmonic progressions, the manipulation of whole-tone scales, and the subtle enhancement of the overtone series all imply Chen's admiration for Debussy and Messiaen. Overall, his free use of contemporary Western techniques, his sensitivity to orchestral timbre, and his ability to reconcile the distinctions between the East and West, prove his mastery of symphonic orchestration.

Chen Qigang's concerto *Er Huang* (2009) for piano and orchestra is the most recent work of his to incorporate elements of the Peking Opera. As the title indicates, the *erhuang* melodic style prevails throughout, using the basic *erhuang* duple meter. Thus, although the work is mostly noted in 4/4, it is appropriate to stylize the theme in a pulse of two beats to accentuate the melodic pattern. The best example can be found in mm. 89-93 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Chen Qigang, Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, mm. 89-93, piano part



Er Huang by Qigang Chen

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Pentatonicism is predominant throughout the concerto, often juxtaposed with chromaticism. The introduction (see Figure 5), written in *zhi* mode, is chromatically harmonized in descending motion:

Figure 5. Chen Qigang, Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, mm. 3-5, piano part



Er Huang by Qigang Chen

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The combination of pentatonicism and chromaticism is sometimes laid out horizontally (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Chen Qigang, Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, mm. 114-115 and 119-122, piano part

Figure 6 displays two systems of musical notation for the piano part of Chen Qigang's Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, measures 114-115 and 119-122. The notation is in treble and bass clefs. The first system (mm. 114-115) shows a 'Pivot of modes' and three modes: F-sharp yu mode, B-flat jue mode, and G gong mode. The second system (mm. 119-122) shows six modes: D-sharp yu mode, E gong mode, E yu mode, F gong mode, F yu mode, F-sharp gong mode, F-sharp yu mode, and G gong mode. The piano part features complex chromaticism and is marked with 'p' (piano).

Er Huang by Qigang Chen

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Chromaticism reflecting a French influence is also applied to certain characteristic intervals in chord progressions. In mm. 22-26 (see Figure 7), the color created by the added sixth and added augmented fourth was used by Messiaen in many of his compositions. Later more examples will be found in *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pâkin*.

Figure 7. Chen Qigang, Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, mm. 22-26, piano part

Figure 7 displays two systems of musical notation for the piano part of Chen Qigang's Piano Concerto *Er Huang*, measures 22-26. The notation is in treble and bass clefs. The first system (mm. 22-26) shows four modes: C-sharp as augmented fourth in G dominant seventh chord, D as added sixth in F major triad, added sixth (D) and augmented fourth (B) in F major triad, and E-sharp as augmented fourth in B major triad. The piano part features complex chromaticism and is marked with 'mf' (mezzo-forte), 'p' (piano), and 'f' (forte).

Er Huang by Qigang Chen

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Olivier Messiaen as a Teacher and Mentor

Like Chen, his teacher Messiaen embraced inclusiveness in his creative process. As early as 1944, upon writing *The Technique of My Musical Language*, he paid tribute to the factors that had shaped his musical identity. Among them were his composition teachers, French and Russian music of the early twentieth century, Shakespeare, mystical poems, plainchant, Hindu rhythms, birdsong, stained-glass windows, and rainbows, all of which endow his music with distinctive color and texture, and imagery. A particularly influential teacher was Paul Dukas, who taught him orchestration and led him to “study the history of the musical language in a spirit of humility and impartiality.”²⁹ Finally, and fundamentally, the Roman Catholic faith provided an ideological foundation that is reflected in many ways in his music.

Chen Qigang attested on many occasions that Messiaen was the most influential figure in his musical career. He admired and benefitted from the master’s pedagogical philosophy of encouraging students to explore their own voices. Chen recalled that during his audition, Messiaen asked him, “Why do you want to study composition?” When Chen responded, “to serve the people,” Messiaen replied, “you should be yourself. Do not become someone else. If one day I can hear and recognize your music without people telling me who wrote it, then you are accomplished as a composer.”³⁰

²⁹ Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. by John Satterfield (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1944), Vol. 1, 8.

³⁰ Lian Xiansheng, “Interview with Chen Qigang.”

This advice profoundly challenged this young Chinese's *Weltanschauung*. Having recently survived a social-political disaster, and having been taught that one should subordinate his personal interests to those of the collective under any conditions, Chen found it difficult to cope with the aesthetic freedom Messiaen presented to him. He later recounted the dilemma, saying:

During the Cultural Revolution in China, you learned to be sociable, subservient to everyone. If necessary, you had to be entirely at the disposal of society. Messiaen was the first person to tell me you have to be true to yourself. This is fundamental for an artist, but few of us are brave enough to face the truth. It took me many years to discover who I really am.³¹

³¹ Kim Smith, "Focus on: Chen Qigang," Carnegie Hall: Ancient Paths, Modern Voices: A Festival Celebrating Chinese Culture, October 21 – November 10, 2009, http://www.carnegiehall.org/chinafestival/themes/classof78_chenqigang.aspx (accessed Mar 19, 2012).

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF *INSTANTS D'UN OPÉRA DE PÉKIN*

Overview

Chen Qigang once stated, “I am a Chinese tree being replanted in the soil of France.”³² Messiaen confirmed the cross-cultural status of his music in the following words:

Depuis que j’ai quitté le Conservatoire, CHEN Qigang a été mon unique élève, et si j’ai accepté de le faire travailler pendant quatre ans, c’est parce que je le tiens en haute estime. Doué d’une intelligence exceptionnelle et d’une excellente audition intérieure, il a assimilé très vite la musique européenne et toutes les musiques actuelles. J’ai lu attentivement toutes ses œuvres musicales, et je puis dire que ses compositions témoignent d’une réelle invention, d’un très grand talent et d’une parfaite assimilation de la pensée chinoise aux conceptions musicales européennes. Toutes ses œuvres écrites depuis 1985 sont très remarquables par leur pensée, leur poésie, leur instrumentation.³³

Since I left the Conservatory, Chen Qigang has been my only pupil, and if I agreed to work with him for four years, it was because I hold him in high esteem. Endowed with exceptional intelligence, and an excellent internal “ear”, he has very quickly assimilated European music and all contemporary music. I have carefully read all his musical works, and I can state that his compositions display real inventiveness, very great talent and a total assimilation of Chinese thinking to

³² Li Xiaomeng, “Interview with composer Chen Qigang,” in *Stroll Along the Chinatown Streets - France*, China Central Television, Channel 13. Rebroadcast on *China Network Television*. <http://news.cntv.cn/society/20110206/103738.shtml> (accessed March 21, 2012).

³³ *Chen Qigang* official webpage. <http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/FE/Fr/French.htm> (accessed April 20, 2012).

European musical concepts. All his works written since 1985 are remarkable by their thought, their poetry and their instrumentation.³⁴

Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin (Moments from a Peking Opera), a single-movement work written by Chen Qigang for piano solo first published in 2000, well exemplifies the fusion of Western and Chinese musical elements alluded to above. Commissioned by the *Concours d'Interprétation Olivier Messiaen 2000*, it was composed in Paris on December 5th and 6th of 2000.³⁵ Chen revised the work in 2004 and republished it in 2005.³⁶ It presents a fusion of diverse musical characters, an elaborate harmonic and tonal design, and a refined formal structure. Virtuosity is demanded by percussive passages that are vividly reminiscent of the fighting scenes in the Peking Opera, with irregular rhythms and rapid, dense tone clusters.

Chen Qigang challenged himself in this work in regard to two primary aspects: the harmonic and tonal design and the formal structure. Tonally, he maximized the pentatonic sonority of a simple melodic element from the Peking Opera in all possible dimensions of the work. His sophisticated tonal language here reflects Asian pentatonicism, multiple key fields, and the influence of Messiaen, which together endow the work with ambiguity and charm. In constructing the form, Chen derived maximal variety from minimal material. In order to lend coherence to his motivic variations, he followed the principle of thematic transformation, or more precisely, Arnold

³⁴ *Chen Qigang* official webpage.

<http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/FE/english.htm> (accessed April 20, 2012).

³⁵ *Chen Qigang* official webpage.

<http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/FE/english.htm> (accessed July 2, 2012)

³⁶ *Ibid.* Both editions are published by Gérard Billaudot Éditeur.

Schoenberg's theory of developing variation. Returning to Chen's metaphor, one can view this music as a creation whose material represents the "Chinese tree" and whose procedure plants it in the "soil of France."

The Theme and the Harmonic and Tonal Design

Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin exists in two versions. The 2000 version consists of 196 measures, and the 2004 version was expanded to 242 measures. In addition to making minor adjustments to notes and chords, rewriting certain passages enharmonically, and adding or eliminating measures, the composer interrupted the intense percussive section that drives to a brilliant climax by inserting a fifteen-measure lyrical passage. The present tonal and formal analysis is based on the 2004 version.³⁷ To help the reader locate the musical figures in the original score, the structure of the work is outlined as follows (see Figure 8). These sectional designations are not identified by the composer. Nevertheless, they provide a key to the underlying formal plan of the work.

³⁷ It should be noted that measure numbers in the 2004 edition do not correspond to the actual number of measures. The numbers referenced in this paper follow an accurate counting of the measures.

Figure 8. Formal Description of *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pâkin*

Formal Section	Measure Numbers	Description
Opening section	mm. 1-19	multiple voices among various key fields; thematic modulations; tempo varies from <i>Lento</i> , <i>discreto</i> , ♩ = 46, ♩ = 63, and <i>più lento</i> .
Variation 1	mm. 20-35	♩ = 152; bitonal texture; ornamentation.
Transition 1	mm. 36-46	elimination and motivic continuation
Variation 2	mm. 57-62	bitonal texture
Transition 2	mm. 62-68	elimination
Variation 3	mm. 68-95	percussive, multiple-voice texture; rhythmic augmentation; frequent meter change
Transition 3	mm. 96-108	frequent meter change
Variation 4	mm. 109-133	rhythmic diminution, chromatic modulation, and octave displacement
Transition 4	mm. 133-156	percussive, multiple-voice texture; rhythmic augmentation and diminution; frequent meter change
Variation 5	mm. 157-177	rhythmic diminution, <i>Gong</i> shift (mode shift), octave displacement
Transition 5	mm. 177-187	elimination
Variation 6	mm. 188-201	starts in key of D major; homophonic, tonal writing; lyricism;
Transition	mm. 201-209	dense, percussive writing
Final climax	mm. 210-237	Messiaen-influenced chordal progressions; multiple voices in various key fields; tempo varies from ♩ = 108, 144, 96, 160, 84, 76, 152, and 60.
Coda	mm. 238-242	echo with the opening section; tempo as <i>Lento</i> ; ends in <i>ad lib.</i> and <i>molto lento</i>

The theme and counter theme respectively designated as I and II by the composer appear simultaneously after the first three measures of the opening section (see measure 4 in Figure 9). The descending four-note figure in the right hand part represents I, and a symmetrical ascending figure in the left hand part represents II.

(I : thème II : contre thème)

①

Lento, discreto
Prologue

augmented fourth
semitone
F-sharp yu mode
Tonic on A

* Added tone (the augmented fourth)
in the Peking Opera;
* at the same time the leading tone to E

Pipa chord:
intervals of
fourth and fifth

②

I
II

fifth relationship

③

④

⑤

rit.

26

Figure 9, continued.

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 9-11) features a vocal line starting with a circled measure 6 containing a half note F# and a quarter note G#. The piano accompaniment has a right hand with a half note B and a left hand with a half note B. Annotations include "espress. flou", "I", "Added note" (pointing to a circled D# in the vocal line), and "II". The second system (measures 11-13) shows the vocal line continuing with a half note B and a quarter note A. The piano accompaniment has a right hand with a half note Bb and a left hand with a half note B. Annotations include "poco movendo", "mp", "F#", and "Leading tone D-sharp resolves to E" (pointing to a circled D# in the vocal line). The third system (measures 14-15) shows the vocal line continuing with a half note B and a quarter note A. The piano accompaniment has a right hand with a half note Bb and a left hand with a half note B. Annotations include "più lento", "Eb", "fendu", and "p".

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The theme, a four-note descending figure “B-A-G-E”, is in fact a type of commonly heard melodic pattern in the Peking Opera, called *xingxian* (行弦). It literally

means “transitional passage” and is commonly played by the fiddle, *jinghu* (see Chapter II, page 14 to 15, and Appendix A), to accompany and sustain the fluency of the actors’ dialogue, movement and acrobatics. As supportive material, *xingxian* appears often in the instrumental accompaniment and carries no concrete meaning. Its melody can be altered in length and speed and may be improvised by the string players; it can also cease whenever the actor is ready to sing.³⁸ *Xingxian*’s simplicity and flexibility allow the composer to embellish it with the greatest freedom. In *Instant d’un Opéra de Pékin*, he took advantage of the modern piano to transpose the *xingxian* passage freely to various keys.

In this particular case, Theme I sounds very close to the *xipi* melodic style from the Peking Opera because of the minor mode sonority. In terms of the Chinese *gong* system discussed in Chapter II, Theme I was written in E *yu* mode, containing an interval relationship of M2 – M2 – m3 in ascending motion. Theme II, in E-flat *yu* mode, has intervals of m3 – M2 – M2 in descending motion; it is in fact the retrograde of Theme I. However, these two themes lay a semitone apart from each other, foreshadowing the presence of multiple key fields in this work.

In the same measure, each thematic note is supported by three notes underneath to form a four-note chord. Each chord shares with the theme itself the intervals of the second, the fourth, and the fifth. When these parallel chords are transposed to “A-D-E-A”,

³⁸ The drummer, as the “conductor” of the band, will use eye communication with the actor to anticipate the termination of *xingxian* and introduce the actual song accompaniment. It takes decades of practice to establish the sense of coordinating by tacit agreement between the actors and accompanists. Xiang, and Shao, *Brief Encyclopedia of Peking Opera*, 114.

they replicate the default open string pitch tuning of the Chinese lute, *pipa* (琵琶). This expressive instrument can produce a wide range of dynamics and depict abundant musical characters, and it is commonly used in the Peking Opera. Thus, both the source of the theme and the basis of its chord construction come from traditional Chinese music and instruments.

These discoveries suggest that a characteristic regional music can be determined to a large degree by the capabilities of instruments, such as tunings that determine the musical modes and pitch organization. The author believes that further studies in ethnomusicology would confirm this point of view, but this investigation would lead beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The Added Augmented Fourth in the Theme

Theme I appears as early as measure 1, in F-sharp *yu* mode. It is hard to identify at first glance, being placed in an extremely low register with octave displacement. A more important phenomenon can be observed in measure 2, where a D-sharp is added to the theme. At this point only four of the five fundamental pitches in a *gong* system have been presented in the theme, where the pitch E is still missing. But this added D-sharp profoundly impacts the tonal plan of the work.

First, F-sharp *yu* mode belongs to the A *gong* system, with A as the tonic, so that the D-sharp functions as an added augmented fourth. It is in fact the “flavor tone” in the Peking Opera, as observed earlier in Chapter II, page 14 to 15 (see also Appendix A).

Second, in terms of Western functional harmonic theory, the added D-sharp, as a leading

tone to E, has a strong tendency to be resolved. Indeed, the expected pitch E does appear in measure 4, in both Theme I and in the lowest note in the left hand (see the circled note E in measure 4, Figure 9). Comparison of the circled notes in measure 10 in the right hand part, and in measure 11 in the left hand part shows that the motion of D-sharp to E secures the full presence of a pentatonic scale (see the circled notes in measures 10 and 11, Figure 9).

Thus, the added augmented fourth degree, which only functions as a passing tone or neighboring tone in the Peking Opera, now carries a diatonic function on an equal-tempered modern piano. In this way, the composer successfully synthesizes two different concepts of harmonic theory from the East and the West. Later in this chapter, it will be shown that the added augmented fourth is placed at the cadence to be resolved to the tonic, a harmonic device that may be traced to Messiaen, reflecting the influence of the master upon the pupil.

Streams of the Fourth and Fifth

The intervals of the pure fourth and fifth are very prominent in the Chinese *gong* pentatonic scale. Their combination in the chords of measure 4, as observed earlier, forms the open string tuning of the Chinese lute, the *pipa*. Such *pipa* chords can be seen throughout the work, in the opening, in the percussive passage, and in the final climax. Parallel fourths and fifths also appear in measures 9 to 11 (See Figure 9), in measures 63 to 65 (see Figure 10, p. 33), and in many other places. The streams of parallel fourths and fifths formed by chord planing reinforce the status of pentatonicism in the work.

In the first nine measures of Figure 9, the letters in the squares indicate the *yu* mode name of each transposed theme. The transposed Theme I in measure 4, right hand is in a fifth relationship ($\boxed{\text{E}}$ and $\boxed{\text{A}}$). In measures 7 to 9, the top voice in the top system, theme I is resolved from $\boxed{\text{C}\sharp}$ to $\boxed{\text{F}\sharp}$. Theme I also hides in the two- measure *Prologue*, where its statement in F-sharp introduces one of the prevailing key areas of the work. Meanwhile, theme II, which is tightly associated with theme I, also appears earlier than its designated entrance. It is introduced in the bass voices in measures 3 to 5 (in the form of dyads containing $\boxed{\text{B}}$ in the upper voice and $\boxed{\text{C}\sharp}$ in the lower voice). Therefore, theme I and theme II share the interrelationship of fifth and fourth as $\boxed{\text{C}\sharp}$ - $\boxed{\text{F}\sharp}$ - $\boxed{\text{B}}$ - $\boxed{\text{E}}$ - $\boxed{\text{A}}$. The $\boxed{\text{E}}$ -flat theme II in measure 4 looks foreign to the mode of the streaming fourths and fifths. However, like F-sharp, E-flat serves as an important key area of the work from the beginning and even sounds as the final note of the work.

Pentatonicism is also implanted into a larger scope of the tonal plan. The relationship of fourth and fifth exists between prolonged phrases, where the consequent phrase usually appears a fifth higher than the antecedent one. Comparisons can be drawn between measures 68 to 78 and 80 to 86, measures 109 to 111 and 112 to 116, and measures 157 to 160 and 161 to 164. Due to copyright restrictions, detailed examples will not be listed here.

The Application of the Semitone

The interval of the semitone produces another prominent phenomenon in this work. Foreign to the consonant pentatonic *gong* system, the semitone becomes another

organizing principle for the multiple-voiced textures and various key fields, obscuring the pure pentatonicism and contributing to a complex tonal plan.

The interval of the semitone is first applied as early as measure 4 between theme I and theme II, conveying the composer's decision to go beyond the fourth and fifth in handling the voice relationships. In fact, in the rest of the work, theme I and theme II appear at the distance of a semitone almost every time. This dissonant interval between the voices greatly alters the tonal purity of the *yu* mode theme. The semitone is also applied between successive phrases and even within one phrase, as in measures 63 to 65, 116 to 117, and 109 (see Figure 10), subtly disorientating the pentatonic melodic development and creating auditory surprise.

Figure 10. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, mm. 63-65, 109, and 116-117

mm. 63-35

semitone

D yu mode

E-flat yu mode

semitone

mm.109

semitone relationship

C-sharp yu mode in E gong system

C-shang mode in B-flat gong system

F gong system

mm.116-117

F-sharp yu mode

G yu mode

semitone relationship

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Multiple-voiced Texture and the Coexistence of Key Fields

Using the intervals of the fourth, the fifth, and the semitone as organizing tools to superpose voices very often leads to a quasi-bitonal texture in this work. The clearest example can be found in variation I, where both hands repeat the theme I material. The

right hand theme remains fixed in E-flat *yu* mode, while the left hand theme starts in G *yu* mode and modulates a semitone higher in each repeat, approaching a half step closer to the right hand each time. The tension increases as the distances between the two voices are compressed.

In the overall scope of the work, at least two key fields coexist. The F-sharp *yu* mode is the first dominating key field, starting with the *Prologue*. It is also stated in Variations 4 and 5, and it is reconfirmed in measure 234 (see Figure 16, page 44), where it is clearly identified as a reference to the *Prologue*. An F-sharp major chord with added augmented sixth provides the work's climax in measure 237, confirming the centrality of this key field. Finally, in the peaceful coda, the theme appears again in F-sharp, as an echo to the opening *Prologue*.

The E-flat *yu* mode, which appears as early as measure 4, is another leading key field. It concludes the opening section and continues on in Variation 1 for another 45 measures in the right hand part. The E-flat *yu* mode theme returns immediately after the lyrical Variation 6 and after the climax, reminding the listener of its importance. The final statement of the theme, in measure 242, occurs in this mode as well. Other key fields based on C-sharp, E and B *yu* modes appear episodically in the work, but less prominently so than those of F-sharp and E-flat.

To summarize the discussion thus far, the theme is not a random, meaningless four-note figure based on a pentatonic scale, but a short, characteristic passage extracted from classical Peking Opera music, carrying rich connotations. The intervals of the fourth and fifth derived from the pentatonic *gong* system consolidate the overall sonority. Key

fields based on a *yu* mode provide local tonal orientation and play an essential role in maintaining the pentatonic sonority, while the application of semitone relationships and the coexistence of multiple key fields increase tonal ambiguity and profoundly shift the outlook of the tonal plan. The original theme is represented numerous times by the techniques of thematic development that will be discussed next.

Developing Variation as the Basis of the Formal Structure

Once the fundamental tonal design of the work is perceived, the recurrences of the theme throughout the piece in different forms may be traced. A quick glance at the whole work shows that the composer based its formal structure upon a technique of thematic development, quite in accordance with Schoenberg's theory of developing variation.³⁹

Schoenberg had introduced this idea as early as 1914, stating that "every melody results from the repetition of a more or less varied basic motive."⁴⁰ Later, in 1950, he defined this concept again in his essay "Bach," which forms part of his book *Style and Idea*:

³⁹ In her dissertation, Lee Wendy Wan-Ki also expounded the application of *Developing Variation* to achieve formal structure of *Instantes d'un Opéra de Peking*. Lee Wendy Wan-Ki, "Unpacking aspects of musical influence in three piano works by Chinese composers," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2006), 62-71. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305309653?accountid=14604>. (accessed December 15, 2011).

⁴⁰ This statement appears in the opening of Schoenberg's essay "Why New Melodies Are Difficult to Understand" in "New Documents in the Schoenberg-Schenker Polemic," *Perspectives of New Music*, 16/1(1977), 115-16. This essay was translated by Bryan R. Simms. David Gable, Robert P. Morgan, ed. *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 81.

Music of the homophonic-melodic style of composition, that is, music with a main theme, accompanied by and based on harmony, produces its material by, as I call it, developing variation. This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity, on the one hand, and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation, on the other hand—thus elaborating the idea of the piece.⁴¹

As a formal technique, developing variation has two emphases: the variations themselves, and their continuation and organization. The dialectical relationship of the two emphases generates the concept of developing variation as a unifying process. The artistic coherence brought out by developing variation also sustains the audience's interest in the work. While Schoenberg endeavored to apply this concept in his free atonal compositions, it is clearly not restricted to atonal composition. For instance, Schoenberg's pupil Alban Berg also applied it in his *Sonata, Op. 1* for piano. A study of the developing variation techniques in *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pâkin* follows.

Thematic Modulation and Bitonal Texture

Strictly speaking, Chen Qigang did not treat the theme with “modes of limited transposition.” In the manner of Messiaen⁴² In *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pâkin*, the theme

⁴¹ Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected writings of Arnold Schoenberg*. ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (New York: St Martins Press, 1975), 397.

⁴² Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language* (trans. John Satterfield. Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1944), Vol. 1, 58-63; Vol. 2, 50-54. The “modes of limited transposition” is a composition technique created by Messiaen and defined in his book, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, chapter XIV. In our present chromatic system, a mode or scale can be transposed chromatically or by shifting its modal degrees. For example, the C major scale has twelve transpositions if transposed chromatically. Or, it can be transposed seven times by shifting its scale degrees. A mode or scale having twelve different modes or having the same number of transposable modes as it has notes is not considered a limited transposition by Messiaen. What he looked for are “modes formed of several symmetrical groups, the last note of each group always being common with the first of the following group. At the end of a certain number of

can be transposed a maximum of twelve times chromatically, which is not characterized as limited transposition. Throughout the work, however, the composer uses many thematic modulations to dilute the pentatonicism of the theme. For instance, Theme I is melodically transposed at least seven times from measure 4 to measure 19 (see circled numbers in Figure 9, pages 26 to 27).

When thematic modulations are superposed in different voices, quasi-bitonal writing becomes prominent.⁴³ In addition to its first appearance in the theme and counter theme in m. 4, quasi-bitonal writing appears in Variation 1 immediately after the opening section. Starting from measure 20, the left hand shifts the theme in ascending motion to approach the theme in E-flat in the right hand, building an intervallic tension that reaches its climax in measures 32 and 33. Then the composer skillfully resolves the conflict between the two hands by dropping an octave in the left hand and transforming the theme into its counter theme. This solution introduces two widely applied techniques that will be discussed next: elimination and motivic continuation.

chromatic transpositions, which varies with each mode, they are no longer transposable.” Messiaen listed seven modes of limited transpositions. The first mode, the whole tone scale, is transposable twice. The second mode, the octatonic scale, is transposable three times. The third mode, the chord of the augmented fifth, is transposable four times. He explains that the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh modes, transposable six times, present less interest for “their too great numbers of transpositions.”

⁴³ Arnold Whittall. “Bitonality.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/03161> (accessed July 9, 2012). Whittall pointed out that bitonality is not a mature music theory and technique, as he stated in this article that “Techniques loosely categorized as bitonal are often passing effects within a harmonic language that is subtly balanced between traditional hierarchies and new symmetries.” He gave large amount of examples to show that although so-called bitonal writing has been widely used to “‘extend’ or ‘floating’ tonality”, to create a higher level of “tonal illusiveness”, or to “suggest a fractured psyche or diametrically opposed traits of character”, it is inevitably shifted “from opposition to agreement.” He concluded that bitonality is “a distinctly mechanical way of deriving something new from something traditional.”

Elimination

Messiaen used the term *elimination* to describe one of his melodic techniques in a chapter titled “Melodic Development.”⁴⁴ He believed that the development of melodies through elimination is “at the basis of all thematic life.” He further explained that elimination “consists of repeating a fragment of the theme, taking away from it successively a part of its notes up to concentration upon itself, reduction to a schematic state, shrunken by strife, by crisis.”⁴⁵

As seen earlier in the opening section, the second and fourth thematic modulations only presented a segment of the theme (see the circled numbers in measures 4 and 8, Figure 9, page 26). Later, in the left hand part at the end of Variation 1 (see Figure 11), the expanded theme is concluded by the four-note counter theme in repeated motion. Through elimination, the phrase length is compressed from a two-measure unit in 4/4 to a single measure unit in 2/4. Accordingly, in the right hand part of measure 36, the last three notes from the previous measure recur in repeated patterns that correspond to the counter theme in the left hand. Through subtraction and repetition of old materials, the composer seamlessly transforms the musical character while maintaining formal and thematic consistency.

⁴⁴ Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, Vol. 1, 35-36; Vol. 2, 19-21.

⁴⁵ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 35.

Figure 11. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, mm. 34-37



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The writing that best matches Messiaen's definition of elimination can be heard in measures 179 to 187, forming the transition between variations 5 and 6 (see Figure 12). While maintaining the busy sixteenth-note writing, the intensity and density of this percussive, *martellato* and toccata-like section are reduced by gradually extracting notes from the texture. Eventually this stormy transitional passage fades into a peaceful background flow, above which the lyrically impressionistic Variation 6 emerges in measure 188.

Figure 12. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, mm. 179, 183, and 186



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Motivic Continuation

Elimination cannot be discussed without mentioning motivic continuation, which is essential to achieve formal consistency. Motivic continuation appears as early as the beginning of Variation 1, where the composer adapts the rhythm and articulation from the

end of the *Lento* section, repurposing them into a rapid tempo. This change instantly breaks the introspective mood of the introduction and quickens the music with vigorous energy. Sometimes the source of a motivic continuation is hidden far earlier in the work. For instance, the source of Variation 4 can be traced back to measure 72 in Variation 3. An example of the combined use of *elimination* and *motivic continuation* is provided by measures 124 to 132 at the end of Variation 4, where the meter is compressed from triple to duple, while part of the melodic contour remains the same. The composer simultaneously uses voice doubling, octave displacement and *martellato* alternating-hand texture to create a complex and virtuosic sonority (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Chen Qigang, *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin*, mm. 124-132



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Ornamentation

In traditional Chinese music, improvised ornamentation is a required skill for many instrumental players, especially for those who play the flute, *dizi* (笛子), the Chinese fiddle, *erhu* (二胡), or a pitched percussion instrument such as the Chinese

marimba, *yangqin* (扬琴).⁴⁶ The most common ornamentation uses neighbor tones, mordents, and trills in a pentatonic context. Appendix B presents an extract from a famous characteristic Chinese piano work by He Luding, *The Cowherd's Flute*, which illustrates this style of ornamentation. In *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin*, neighbor-tone ornamentation is used intensively in Variation 1 from measure 28 to measure 35, where the written-out mordents in sixteenth-notes are an addition to the revised version. Variation 4 presents similar ornamentation, combined with chromatic transposition.

Rhythmic Augmentation, Diminution, and “Gong Shift” (Mode Shift)

The techniques of augmentation and diminution are often used in contrapuntal music, altering original material through doubling or halving the value of each note. In modern theory, any portion of the material can be augmented or diminished; different ratios can exist simultaneously in one single phrase, allowing greater freedom in the use of this technique. Messiaen extended this practice by using ratios smaller than an integer which are produced by adding or withdrawing the dot.⁴⁷ He also applied inexact augmentations to vary the pulses within a single phrase.⁴⁸

Augmentation and diminution are generally used in a conventional manner in *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin*. Examples can be found in Variation 2 and Transition 4, where the ratio of the theme and counter theme is 1:2 or 2:1. Measure 232 in the climax,

⁴⁶ Du and Qin, *Chinese Music Theory*. pp. 95-96, 333.

⁴⁷ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 18; Vol. 2, 3-4.

⁴⁸ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 19.

however, shows a more advanced application of this technique (see Figure 14). The effect of polyrhythm is created through superposing three layers with different ratios, and by rhythmically displacing these layers. In particular, the middle layer is displaced from the outer layers by a sixteenth note. Sustained chords in different registers of the keyboard maximize the resonance, as if one might hear the timpani, cymbals, and chimes at the same time.

Figure 14. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, m. 232



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Moreover, Variation 5 presents rhythmic diminution dramatized through “gong shift.” In the left hand, the thematic material is compressed into a rapid sixteenth-note passage, while in every two beats one note is changed (see the circled notes in Figure 15). These deliberate intervallic alterations produce a special effect of mode shift based on the gong pentatonic systems. All the modes start on E but belong to different gong systems. This shift of modes produces a nimble alternation of color within the dense texture. This technique of melodic development is frequently used in traditional Chinese music. Although appropriate examples cannot be found in the Beijing Opera, the piano

composition *Variations in D* by Li Yinghai provides a good example (see Chapter II, page 13, and Appendix C).

Figure 15. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, mm. 157-160

theme

note E: the starting note of each mode

E zhi mode in A gong system

E shang mode in D gong system

E yu mode in G gong system

E jue mode in C gong system

E yu mode in G gong system

E shang mode in D gong system

E zhi mode in A gong system

E gong mode in E gong system

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Octave Displacement

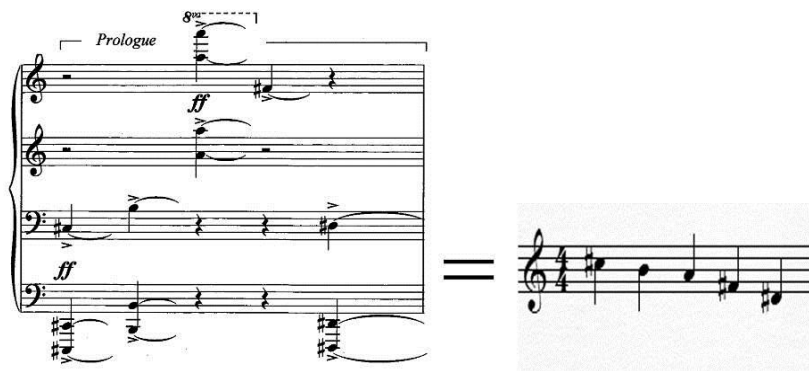
Octave displacement is another way to transform the original theme into a scarcely recognizable form. Messiaen named this “change of register,” another technique to serve “melodic development.”⁴⁹ The highly displaced theme can be found at the end of the opening section, in measures 16 through 18, and it is echoed at the end of the work, where the *portato* touch outlining a melodic voice in the right hand combines with the sustaining pedal to create a foggy, dreamy space.

A very sensitive ear will notice that the principal theme in fact appears right at the opening *Prologue*, even before m. 4 (see “added augmented fourth” in mm. 29-30, and Figure 9). Octave displacement in the bass register of the piano hides the true face of the

⁴⁹ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 36; Vol. 2, 20-21.

musical material. If the opening is the darkest and most obscure moment of the work, then the opposite, suggesting an operatic scene with a fiery embrace, occurs in measure 234, presenting the theme *fortissimo* with octave displacement and rhythmic augmentation (see Figure 16). This is the peak of the entire work in terms of pitch. Just as in the opening, the music here is centered in the key of F sharp, a distant echo that unifies the implied tonality in the piece.

Figure 16. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Peking*, m. 234



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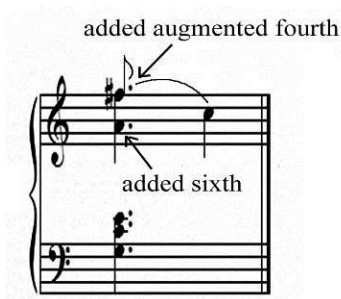
Each variation discussed above is unique; used together they produce coherent musical thought. The principle of developing variation permeates *Instantes d'un Opéra de Peking*, in which the melody-and-accompaniment texture traditional to piano music virtually disappears. Chen's use of this compositional technique furnishes listeners with perspectives other than those based on functional harmony and tonality.

Additional Highlights of the Work

Many aspects of Chen's writing in *Instant's d'un Opéra de Pékin* reflect additional French influences. The score layout in multiple staves is reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel. The use of parallel chord progressions at the opening recalls Debussy's chord planing in his piano preludes *Canope* and *La Cathédrale engloutie*. Moreover, some of Messiaen's favorite colors and melodic cadences are unfolded in the final culmination of *Instant's d'un Opéra de Pékin*.

Messiaen believed that the added sixth and the added augmented fourth have “citizenship” to the “perfect chord” (the major triad), for the added sixth is part of the appoggiatura of the triad, and the added augmented fourth existing in the overtone series is generated by the “resonance of the fundamental.”⁵⁰ Thus he innovatively added both of them to a major triad, sounded as follows, and created a cadence resolving the augmented fourth to the tonic (see Figure 17).⁵¹

Figure 17. Olivier Messiaen's Harmonic Resolution



⁵⁰ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 47.

⁵¹ Messiaen, Vol. 1, 31, 47; Vol. 2, 13, 33.

In *Instantes d'un Opéra de Peking*, a G-flat major triad with an added sixth and an added augmented fourth is first heard at the end of measure 233 in the climax (see Figure 18). It is followed by the opening D major triad of measure 236 with the same harmonic sonority. After a series of arpeggiated major triads with augmented fourth in the right hand of the same measure, the music reaches a climax in measure 237, where a C major triad appears for the first time and is resolved an augmented fourth downwards to F-sharp major. This resolution based on the overtone series was clearly explained in Messiaen's book.⁵² The scoring here is expanded to four staves, covering almost the entire range of the keyboard. Like a huge firework with spectacular lights, sparkles, and colors, this moment provides vivid sensory stimulation.

Figure 18. Chen Qigang, *Instantes d'un Opéra de Peking*, m. 233, 236, and 237

C sharp as added sixth in E dominant seventh chord

Augmented fourth in major seventh chords

A as added sixth in C major triad

accel.

fff

C as augmented fourth in G-flat major triad

B as added sixth in D major triad

The C chord is resolved through a descending fourth to a F-sharp chord.

D-sharp as added sixth F-sharp major triad

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⁵² Ibid.

At this climactic moment, the added augmented fourth degree, which once served only as a “flavor tone” in the pentatonic context, now functions diatonically and establishes a crucial relationship with the F-sharp tonic. In addition, what is perceived in tonal harmony as the added sixth in a major triad is also the final degree in the pentatonic *gong* system. Thus the Chinese and Western tonal system are drawn closely together, increasing the harmoniousness and tonal stability of the final climax.

Conclusion

Evidence of Chen’s ability to synthesize cross-cultural musical elements is abundant throughout *Instant d’un Opéra de Pékin*. The pentatonic scale and its indigenous intervals, primarily the second, the fourth, and the fifth, prevail in both horizontal and vertical dimensions of the texture. However, one can barely find any other melodic element that the composer borrowed directly from his national music. The so-called “theme” is merely an instant extracted from the Peking Opera, perfectly reflected in the programmatic title of the work. The overall tonal plan is accomplished by the characteristic intervals derived from the string tuning of traditional instruments such as the *jinghu* and the *pipa*, and by the thoughtful permutation of the thematic “moments.”

The compositional devices that are employed, such as bitonality, chromatic transposition, elimination, motivic continuation, rhythmic augmentation and diminution, and octave displacement, were mainly developed in the twentieth century. Chen Qigang seeks to integrate these techniques for the purpose of structural coherence. For instance, at its initial appearance in measure 4 the theme has already been subjected to many

transformations, including tone row rearrangement, melodic superposition, and quasi-bitonal writing. In other cases, single and combined effects such as thematic modulation, elimination with motivic continuation, rhythmic augmentation and diminution, and octave displacement further demonstrate the composer's craftsmanship in constructing an intellectual art work. In addition, the composer's clear appreciation of the music of his native country is emphasized through characteristic variations using pentatonic melodic ornamentation and mode shift.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

A Chinese Tree Replanted in the Soil of France

Chen Qigang's music reveals a strong sense of assimilation. He prefers not to be categorized as a follower of "schools" such as Neo-classicism, Expressionism, or Nationalism; neither does he expect to be specifically labeled as a Chinese or French composer. What he truly values are his unchangeable Chinese roots; the emotional resonance of his national music, especially the art of the Peking Opera; his years studying and living in Western culture; and the masters who cultivated his artistic insight.

As a serious classical composer, Chen Qigang prizes individuality. He believes it is an artist's obligation to maintain integrity, not allowing public criticism to manipulate one's principles; for him, an artist's vision should always reach beyond the limits of patriotic feeling and political ideology.⁵³ In his personal experience, Chen Qigang views his cross-cultural background positively. Western culture released him from his ideological taboos, and its liberal environment shaped him into a more complete musician. Simultaneously, Chinese culture formed part of his individuality and inspired in him the aspiration to preserve and elevate its traditions. He neither believes that one culture is

⁵³ Lian Xiansheng, "Interview with Chen Qigang."

superior to the other nor approves of subordinating either culture to the other. When asked why he turned to the Peking Opera for material, Chen responded, “I never score a work for the sake of using traditional Chinese elements. They have been my language since I was very young, and they are now flowing with my blood, although I have lived in Paris for most of my time now.”⁵⁴ The study of Chen Qigang’s music confirms that, in the process of musical creation, cross-cultural influences are not subordinate but rather complementary to each other. As “a Chinese tree replanted in the soil of France,” this composer relies on the synthesis of these influences and personal experiences to generate his individual style.

Along with many other Chinese composers, Chen Qigang has tirelessly promoted the development of contemporary Chinese music. Recognized as an accomplished composer of chamber and large ensemble music, Chen enriched the twenty-first-century piano repertoire with *Instants d’un Opéra de Pékin*, a work characterized by unique musical sources, fruitful imagination and unbounded expression. Despite the limited scope of the present research, it is hoped that it will contribute to elevating the awareness and appreciation of contemporary Chinese music among the Western musical public, and in particular that it will stimulate greater interest in Chen Qigang’s works.

⁵⁴ Chen Jie, “East Meets West in musical score,” in *China Daily*, August 26, 2003, p.9.http://www.chenqigang.com/chenqigang/chenqigang/Eng_Dissertation/200382723935.htm (accessed March 2, 2012).

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APPENDIX A

XIPI AND ERHUANG MELODIC STYLES

1. XIPI STYLE IN THE PEKIN OPERA
2. ERHUANG STYLE IN THE PEKIN OPERA

1. *Xipi* Style in the Peking Opera

From *Farewell My Concubine*

Original key: E-flat

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a continuous melodic line. The second staff continues the melody, with an upward arrow pointing to a circled note labeled "added tone". The third staff begins with a circled note labeled "added tone", followed by a melodic line that ends with a bracket labeled "Cadence". A bracket labeled "Start singing" is positioned at the end of the third staff.

From *The Stratagem of the Empty City*

Original key: F

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a continuous melodic line. The second staff continues the melody, with an upward arrow pointing to a circled note labeled "added note". The staff ends with a bracket labeled "Cadence". A bracket labeled "Start singing" is positioned at the end of the second staff.

2. *Erhuang* Style in the Peking Opera

From *The Story of the Orphan*

Original key: F

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff contains a melodic line with a circled note and an upward arrow labeled "added note". The second staff contains a corresponding line with a circled note and a bracket labeled "Cadence". A bracket at the end of the second staff is labeled "start singing".

From *Remonstrance to the Queen*

Original key: D

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff has a bracket labeled "cadence" under the first measure, a circled note with an upward arrow labeled "added note" in the third measure, and a bracket labeled "cadence" under the last measure. The second staff has a circled note with an upward arrow labeled "added note" in the first measure, a bracket labeled "cadence" under the last measure, and a bracket labeled "singing" at the end. The word "singing" appears above the first and last measures of the first staff.

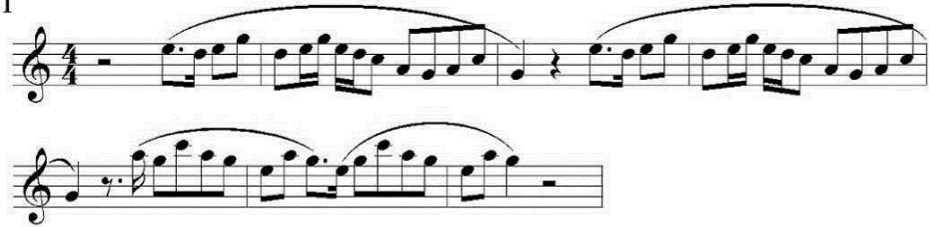
APPENDIX B

HE LUTING, *THE COWHERD'S FLUTE*

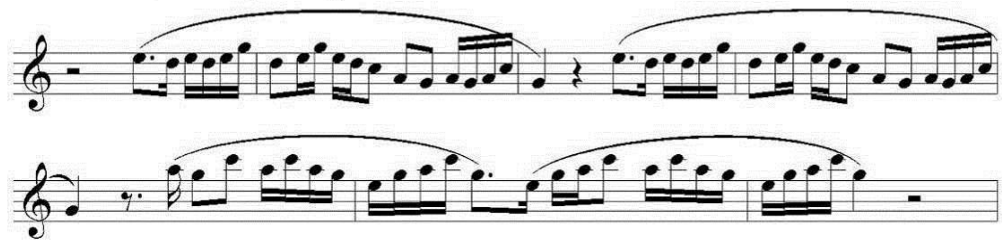
(Right hand only)

Written in ternary form:

part I



Part III: ornamentation based on part I



APPENDIX C

LI YINGHAI, *VARIATIONS IN D*

Theme: D *gong* mode, tonic on D



Variation I: D *zhi* mode, tonic on G



Variation II: D *shang* mode, tonic on C



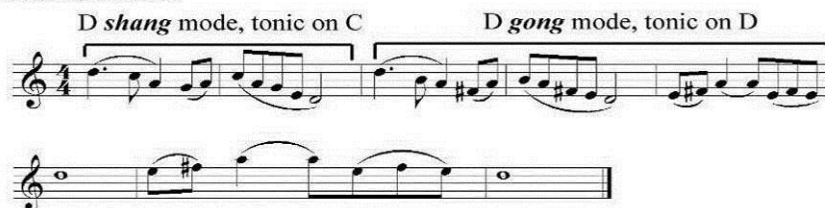
Variation III: D *yu* mode, tonic on F



Variation IV: D *jue* mode, tonic on B-flat



Coda: combined modes



APPENDIX D
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